

Partnership Summit Recommendations

On October 16, 2014, a national summit on integrating employment and housing strategies to prevent and end homelessness — Partnerships for Opening Doors — was convened by the [US Department of Labor \(DOL\)](#), the [US Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#), the [US Interagency Council on Homelessness \(USICH\)](#) and the [Butler Family Fund](#).

Focused on addressing the employment needs of adults in families and single adults, including individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, the Partnerships Summit builds upon employment and income related objectives detailed in [Opening Doors: the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness](#) and the President’s Job-Driven Training initiative that calls for better alignment across the Federal government to connect individuals to in-demand jobs. Labor Secretary Perez, who is also the current chair of USICH, is an active leader in this work. The passage and signing of the 2014 [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#) ¹ presents new opportunities to better meet the employment, training, and career needs of persons experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.

More than 100 people participated in the Partnerships Summit, including teams from eleven (11) communities, Federal government agencies, and national organizations. The purpose was to identify key activities that DOL, HUD, USICH and other Federal agencies could undertake in the near term as well as the longer-term efforts that will sustain the partnership between homeless assistance and employment programs going forward to improve access to quality jobs, skills training, and supportive services in the context of employment, training, and career pathways for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The highly interactive Summit engaged participants in discussions to generate a range of “ideas” across four (4) distinct categories (Busting Through Silos, Promising Practices, Engaging the Private Sector and Employers, and Harnessing Federal Resources) that could be considered for implementation by government at the local, state, and Federal level and in partnership with the private sector, philanthropy and nonprofit organizations. The table below captures the “ideas” prioritized by participants for consideration by Federal agencies.

¹ WIOA reauthorized WIA, the Workforce Investment Act

Busting Through Silos

What guidance could HUD, DOL, HHS² and other Federal agencies work together to provide to the homeless assistance system and workforce system that would result in both systems working better together to solve homelessness and joblessness?

Themes:

- Encourage and show how to combine housing and employment
- Align performance measures and outcomes across funding
- Promote data sharing
- Provide guidance on how to work with varying definitions of homelessness and program eligibility
- Provide more flexibility in determining how exactly communities decide to use their funds
- Encourage CoC³ and WIOA⁴ grantees to work together
- Provide guidance on setting benchmarks for hard to employ (including those clients who are experiencing homelessness)
- Provide guidance and technical assistance (TA) on incorporating employment into coordinated entry
- Provide guidance on how to refer individuals to workforce and homeless assistance systems
- Provide guidance on how HHS-funded and other Federally funded benefits programs can fit within the larger DOL/HUD funding streams

How could HUD and DOL encourage pairing of employment services with rapid re-housing?

Themes:

- Encourage alignment of performance measures and goals related to housing stability and career track employment
- Show how to use Federal resources to provide flexible funding needed to meet individual client needs
- Encourage more robust partnerships between employment service providers and rapid re-housing providers
- Encourage navigators in the workforce system and rapid rehousing; show how to fund navigators
- Create incentives for collaboration
- Provide operational guidance on integrated services (what this means and how to do it)
- Educate employment service providers on rapid rehousing (homelessness 101 plus RRH program) and educate homeless assistance providers on employment services (employment & training systems 101)
- Develop and disseminate promising practices that integrate employment and rapid rehousing

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

³ Continuum of Care Program (CoC) funds local networks of organizations to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and to minimize the trauma and dislocation caused to individuals, families, and communities by homelessness.

⁴ 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

How can DOL and HUD partner to educate the workforce system about the strengths and needs of the job-seekers who are experiencing homelessness and how homeless services are organized?

Themes:

- Educate the workforce system about the skills that people experiencing homelessness can offer to employers
- Educate the workforce system about barriers that people experiencing homelessness face and how to overcome them
- Offer joint Federal training and professional development on working with homeless jobseekers and promote what works
- Provide materials to WIBs⁵ to help inform employers about successful models around the country
- “Door swings both ways” - HUD and DOL should work together to educate both workforce systems and CoCs about what is in it for them
- Create a resource/information center (webinars, website, peer learning, best practice guides, etc.)

How could the process of developing the state WIOA plan be used to leverage greater understanding of the needs and opportunities to serve job-seekers who are experiencing homelessness?

Themes:

- Incorporate CoCs into planning process
- Use HMIS⁶ and PIT⁷ data to identify specific populations in order to focus efforts
- Require the use of HMIS data in developing the state WIOA plan and coordinate with the state WIOA developers
- Provide “how to” examples of planning processes that effectively incorporate CoCs, homeless assistance providers, and people with direct experience of homelessness

⁵ Local workforce investment boards (WIB), in partnership with local elected officials, are responsible for planning and overseeing the local program. The board is responsible for developing the local plan to be submitted to the Governor for approval, designating local one-stop operators, designating eligible providers of training services, negotiating local performance measures, and assisting in developing a statewide employment statistics system.

⁶ Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. Each Continuum of Care is responsible for selecting an HMIS software solution that complies with HUD’s data collection, management, and reporting standards.

⁷ The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single night in January. HUD requires that Continuums of Care conduct an annual count of homeless persons who are sheltered in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens on a single night. Continuums of Care also must conduct a count of unsheltered homeless persons every other year (odd numbered years). Each count is planned, coordinated, and carried out locally.

Promising Practices

In what ways do communities need to be equipped to implement these promising practices? What type of “how to” resources are needed?

Themes:

- Equip communities with techniques that support regular meetings, case management, and problem solving
- Provide TA on promising practices
- Provide ‘how to’ materials such as integration training which teaches people how to use navigators, other tools
- Disseminate method of practice ideas to communities
- Provide communities with a revised and coherent definition of success, especially as it relates to timing flexibility for housing stabilization
- Share recommendations of best practices for ways to blend funding, policy, procedure, outcomes, and implementation

How can a career pathways approach that is focused on adult learners work for people at risk of or with histories of homelessness? What are the barriers to making career pathways effective? Are modifications necessary? If so what?

Themes:

- A career pathways approach should educate the job-seeker about the benefits of enhanced training and education because it will improve his or her chances of maintaining a long-term career
- Emphasize integration of “work first” approaches and “on ramps” as an important component of successful career pathways
- Provide “how to” guidance on serving people experiencing/at risk of homelessness and “how to” provide extra supports and connections
- Emphasize connecting social enterprise programs to mainstream career pathways
- A major barrier to the success of career pathways is that many employers are risk averse and do not want to take a chance with someone who is low-skilled
- Another barrier is that the current culture simply links job-seekers who are experiencing homelessness with low-paying jobs that do not offer any potential for a future career
- Shift focus to large anchor employers so that individuals experiencing homelessness can be targeted for entry-level career jobs
- The career pathways approach must consider all aspects of the job-seeker, and should subsequently find him or her a job based on interests and skills

How can American Job Centers (One Stops) be more accommodating to people with histories of homelessness?

Themes:

- Place One Stop staff “experts” in the homeless system in order to create more friendly environments in these centers
- Diversify the staff of One Stop centers so that they are more culturally competent and reflect the backgrounds of the population served
- One Stops can be difficult to navigate, so it is necessary for individuals experiencing homelessness to have a navigator help them
- One Stops staff members should be going into the neighborhoods of those they wish to serve, instead of waiting for people to seek help
- There is a need for one-on-one support, including support for low skilled individuals
- One Stops should look to accommodate people who cannot register in the system because they are illiterate or have few computer skills
- One Stops can be more accommodating by weighting funding with performance standards

What are some of the characteristics of job-seekers who are experiencing homelessness that may need to be considered as states negotiate performance measures under WIOA? What’s the opportunity to encourage the local WIB⁸ to set a priority to addressing the needs of people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness and adopt promising practices?

Themes:

- DOL should encourage adjustment of performance outcomes, time frame for service, and expectations if states are serving homeless and other families and individuals with significant barriers to employment
- DOL should encourage adjustment of performance outcomes, time frame for service and expectations that neutralize the risks to states associated with serving people experiencing homelessness and other challenges.
- Many job-seekers experiencing homelessness are burdened with criminal records, lack of government-issued IDs, weak work histories, low literacy levels, and few marketable skills.
- In addition, many people experiencing homelessness have limited access to transportation, computers, and telephones
- WIBs should be incentivized to focus specifically on homeless populations (i.e. a certain amount of resources)
- Identify alternative funding that can be leveraged with WIB funding to provide comprehensive approaches.

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- WIBs should be encouraged to focus on serving rapid rehousing clients
- Promote using the Governor’s “set-aside” to prioritize serving people who experience homelessness
- Issue guidance and share promising practices on ways communities could coordinate to provide employers with a single pool of job-seekers experiencing homelessness (versus various programs approaching employers separately)
- Use opportunities under WIOA for specific methods of addressing homeless population

Harnessing Federal Resources

What information is needed to enable communities to better utilize these Federal resources to provide employment and training to better serve people at risk of or with histories of homelessness?

Themes:

- Promote USDA’s (U.S. Department of Agriculture) SNAP⁹ E&T Programs
- Provide “how to” guidance on combining TANF with DOL and HUD resources to serve families in integrated employment and housing programs.
- Promote re-purposing SAMHSA (Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration) block grant for employment services in states that have expanded Medicaid under Affordable Care Act.
- Provide “how to” guidance on how providers and access and use U.S. Department of Education’s Rehabilitation Services Administration
- HHS should permit states to use funds for foster care prevention to provide employment and training
- Create a crosswalk of available funding sources and “how to” use these resources to fund all the components of an integrated housing and employment program for people experiencing homelessness
- Streamline Federal funds and grants — almost like a block grant/community foundation— community advisory board
- Create online resources that help communities do this

⁹ The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Employment and Training Program (SNAP E&T) is an employment and training program for adults in households receiving USDA nutrition assistance through SNAP.

What are the opportunities related to the 15 percent set-aside for statewide activities under WIOA (i.e. governors discretionary fund) to further innovative approaches to providing employment and training for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness?

Themes:

- DOL & HUD Secretaries issue challenge to governors to target a portion of set-aside for collaborative WIB/CoC approaches that integrate housing and employment for persons to exit homelessness
- Encourage use of funds to support safety net services—graduated decrease of services.
- Encourage governors and workforce boards to provide the “flexible” funds necessary to provide comprehensive services
- Create alignment with the coordinated entry system being developed by CoCs.

How could we create a Federal demonstration program to integrate employment and housing strategies to prevent and end homelessness that braids existing Federal funds and requires state and local funding commitments and leverage? What other ways are there to seed local pilots or demonstrations that braid/combine Federal/state/local funds?

Themes:

- Create a project that provides flexibility for states to address the safety net “cliff” issue
- Identify philanthropic partners to fund a national “contest” for the best approaches to braiding funding
- Couple flexible philanthropic funding with intensive Federal TA (HUD/HHS/DOL) to integrate employment and housing strategies (model after LGBT homelessness prevention pilot)
- Add employment/housing integration to existing place based efforts

Engaging Private Sector and Employers

What strategies foster supportive work environments and engaged employers when working with people who are experiencing homelessness? How can this be replicated?

Themes:

- Mentorship model—employers who connect with mentor and/or provide job coach
- Increase employer awareness of challenges faced by families and individuals who are experiencing homelessness and reduce the stigma of homelessness
- Establish strong communication —employers may provide more flexibility if they understand issues.
- Sometimes it is not in best interest to share housing status of a job applicant (homelessness stigma)
- Build relationship with businesses
- Meet business needs in filling open positions
- Job matching
- Use “work experience” of unpaid internships as means of getting an individual in a work setting – this offers free help for business and the chance for the individual to prove his or her capability as a valued employee
- OJT (on the job training) —reimbursement of a portion of salary makes it easier for employers to be more willing to take perceived risk
- Supported work—act as a “staffing agency” to provide protection for those businesses that it will help

What private sector incentives and social service supports could be deployed to increase access to unsubsidized employment for job-seekers who are experiencing homelessness?

Themes:

- Fund transitional jobs
- Show how to leverage social enterprise as a strategy to provide employers with qualified employees who have completed training
- Show how to use the public workforce system in state, municipal contracts to allow homeless clients to be targeted without being identified.
- Educate employers about barriers that people experiencing homelessness face and how to overcome them while teaching them skills they can bring to job
- Provide flexible funding for supports and provide intensive education to employers to understand why integrating employment and housing is important